

SYMPOSIUM PAPER

**The Changing Role of the EU Factor
in Greek-Turkish Relations**

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INTRODUCTION

As the main theme of this symposium suggests, Greece has undergone dramatic changes in numerous fields over the last few years. Few would doubt, however, that the change in the political climate between Greece and Turkey has not been among the most spectacular ones. Despite bitter historical background of uninterrupted conflict and warfare and existing disputes in a wide range of issues, Greece and Turkey showed for the first time their intention to overcome cold-war climate and try to improve working relations. This paper will focus on the changing role of the European Union factor in Greek-Turkish relations. I will argue that Greece's position as regards Turkey's EU membership has been modified due to a new view of Greece's strategic interests. This change is not the result of tactical calculation but rather of a new strategic approach regarding Greek-Turkish relations.

The viability of this rapprochement, however, depends on Turkey's successful democratisation, a process fostered by Turkey's interest in acceding to the European Union. The European Union has thus become a factor whose importance for the normalisation of Greek-Turkish relations can only be characterised as catalytic.

GREECE AND TURKEY-EU RELATIONS

It is commonplace to argue that Greece and Turkey have been in constant military and political competition. Having achieved its independence against the Ottoman Empire in 1830, Greece's diplomatic history in the 19th and early 20th century was mostly tantamount with warfare against the declining empire. The wars in 1897, 1912-1913, 1916-1918, 1919-1922² led to the formation of modern Greece's borders and embedded the view that Greek and Turkish foreign interests could only be antithetical. The establishment of the Turkish republic led to a brief détente period when Venizelos and Atatürk attempted to open a new page in Greek-Turkish relations; however, the pogrom against the Greek minority of Istanbul and the emergence of the Cyprus issue in the 1950s pulled Greek-Turkish relations into a quagmire. While the Greek minority of Istanbul eventually faded away, the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus did not deescalate tension in Greek-Turkish relations. Deteriorating relations among the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities directly affected Greek-Turkish relations. The culmination of this process came about in 1974 with the coup instigated by the Greek junta against the legitimate Cypriot government and the Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern part of the island since then. Greece and Turkey came to the brink of full-scale war in 1974, and this tension had a spill over effect over the Aegean and the rest of Greek-Turkish disputes. Tension and competition at military and political level continued to be the main patterns of Greek-Turkish relations. The introduction of the European

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² The 1974 military operations in Cyprus could arguably be added to that list.

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Economic Community variable into the grid of Greek-Turkish relations would necessarily have to adapt to the existing foreign policy objectives.

Turkey-EU relations have a longer past than one might think. Turkey applied for membership to the European Economic Community as early as July 1959, one month after Greece's application and signed an Association Agreement on 12 September 1963.³ An Additional Protocol was signed in November 1970 where the rules for Turkey's prospective customs union with the European Economic Community were elaborated, which was to be followed on a decision on Turkey's accession to the Community. However, unfavourable political developments in Turkey, and most important, the military coup of 12 September 1980 precluded any possibility of Turkey's EU membership. Turkey's isolation abated with its return to civilian government in 1983. Trade barriers were removed, and on 14 April 1987 an application for full EEC membership was submitted by the government of Turgut Özal.

Nonetheless, Turkey-EEC relations would be impacted by Greece's accession to the Community in 1981. The rule of unanimity in the EEC decision-making process provided Greece with leverage in influencing Turkey-EEC relations. While Turkish-Greek disputes in the Aegean –ranging from the delineation of territorial waters, airspace and continental shelf to that of Flight Information Regions (FIR)– the unresolved Cyprus problem and the rest of bilateral differences remained unsettled, Greece decided to exploit Turkey's interest in improving its relations with the European Union by conditioning its consent to the improvement of Turkey-EU relations on the modification of Turkey's policies on their bilateral disputes. As Turkey did not seem willing to alter its policies, Turkey-EU relations suffered a stalemate as any decisions that could improve Turkey-EU relations were blocked by Greece's veto. The channelling of financial aid provided by the Fourth Financial Protocol of 1981 between Turkey and the European Union was frozen. Moreover, the EEC Commission politely rejected Turkey's application in December 1989. The Commission based its decision on the "substantial economic and developmental gap between the Community and Turkey", which implied that Turkey could not fulfil its obligations deriving from the EEC economic and social policies. Besides, it cited Turkey's disputes with Greece, the Cyprus issue and the fact that its human rights regime and "respect for minorities" had "not yet reached the level required in a democracy".⁴ To appease Turkey's discontent for the polite rejection of its EEC membership application in 1989, the European Commission initiated a renewed effort to accomplish a customs union between Turkey and the European Economic Community, improve cooperation in the industrial and other fields and release the funds provided for in the Fourth Financial Protocol.⁵ Nonetheless, it was Greece again, which blocked the last part of the Commission initiative. However, the EU leaders agreed in the EU Lisbon Summit of June 1992 that "the Turkish role in the present European political situation is of the greatest importance", and negotiations on achieving Turkey-EU customs union were resumed in November 1992. In the EU Copenhagen Summit of June 1993 the EU leaders agreed on a set of conditions to be met by all states aiming to accede to the European Union. The later known as "Copenhagen criteria" included, first, the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities; second, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union, and third, the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. Candidate states should also have created the conditions for its integration through the adjustment of its administrative structures, so that European

³ Turkey applied for association with the European Economic Community on 31st July 1959 and signed the Association Agreement on 12d September 1963.

⁴ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000* (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 178-179

⁵ William Hale, *ibid.*, p. 234-235

Community legislation transposed into national legislations implemented effectively through appropriate administrative and judicial structures.⁶

The articulation of the Copenhagen criteria and Turkey's evident failure to meet them due to its bleak human and minority rights record and military-influenced democracy added one more argument to Greece's opposition to improved Turkey-EU relations. Through its consistent veto policy, Greece was effectively depriving Turkey of any closer relations to the European Union; this objective was, however, being achieved at increasing political cost.

Greece's EU partners were dissatisfied by the way Greece undermined EU policies with respect to Turkey. Greece was seen as obstructing any Turkey-EU approach for the sake of its own national interests. Turkey was viewed as a country with a huge domestic market and crucial strategic importance. Greek national interests might require a tough approach on the issue of Turkey-EU relations, so that Turkey would modify its policies on Greek-Turkish disputes. On the other hand, this policy backfired against EU general interests and the national interests of the remaining EU member states. Increasing pressure from EU member states coincided with Greece's decision to set the membership of Cyprus to the European Union as one of its primary foreign policy strategic objectives. After a series of bilateral and UN-brokered negotiations failed to solve the political problem of Cyprus, Greece hoped that Cyprus' accession to the European Union would boost the conflict resolution process. Greece's intention to achieve concrete steps to achieve Cyprus' EU membership facilitated the beginning of a bargaining process whereby Greece would agree on the piecemeal improvement of Turkey-EU relations while it would secure the progress of Cyprus' EU membership application.⁷ So on 6 March 1995 Greece lifted its veto against the Turkey-EU customs union agreement and the release of EU funds for Turkey provided for by the Fourth Additional Protocol on the condition that accession negotiations between Cyprus and the European Union would commence within six months after the end of the EU Intergovernmental Conference –in effect within 1998. The customs union agreement between Turkey and the European Union came into force on 1 January 1996. Greece's decision to concede to that development marked a milestone as regards Greek views of Turkey-EU relations.

Greek-Turkish relations were to sharply deteriorate shortly after the customs union agreement came into force. The Ymia-Kardak crisis of 30 January 1996 and the Öcalan crisis of 15 February 1999 showed that the cold war in Greek-Turkish relations was far from over; on the contrary, Greece and Turkey came twice in two years close to the brink of armed conflict. Greece's willingness for détente in Greek-Turkish relations, lucidly manifested in December 1998 when it supported Cyprus' decision to deploy a controversial S-300 missile detachment not in Cyprus but in Crete, had come to no avail. The fiasco of Greek policy in the Öcalan affair led the Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Simitis to appoint a new Foreign Minister: In the person of George Papandreou Simitis thought that he had found the politician that could restore the international image of Greece, which was severely damaged during the Öcalan crisis and reshape its foreign policy. George Papandreou would, indeed, leave a very strong personal imprint on the efforts for a Greek-Turkish rapprochement.

A pivotal part of the new Greek foreign policy would necessarily involve policies toward Turkey.⁸ In May 1999 the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers George Papandreou

⁶ European Union, European Commission, *EU Enlargement: A Historic Opportunity*, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/intro/criteria.htm>

⁷ Semin Suvarierol, "The Cyprus Obstacle in Turkey's Road to the European Union" in Ali Çarkoğlu and Barry Rubin (eds), *Turkey and the European Union* (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 62-66

⁸ Dimitris Keridis, "Domestic Developments and Foreign Policy: Greek Policy Toward Turkey" in Dimitris Keridis and Dimitrios Triantafyllou (eds.), *Greek-Turkish Relations in the Era of Globalisation* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, 2001), pp. 9-18

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and İsmail Cem initiated a dialogue initiative on low-profile bilateral issues, e.g. trade, tourism and environmental protection. The display of mutual goodwill at both the governmental and grassroots levels during the earthquakes that hit Turkey and Greece in August and September 1999 respectively, contributed to a dramatic reversal of hostile attitudes in the public opinion and the press, thereby facilitating détente efforts.

The Greek-Turkish rapprochement would necessarily have a positive influence on Turkey-EU relations. The latter had suffered a severe drawback in the EU Luxembourg Summit of December 1997 when Turkey was omitted from the list of the states awarded the status of EU candidate. Nonetheless, efforts to achieve EU candidate status for Turkey were resumed. Greece was now decreasingly hostile against Turkey's EU membership process, but other EU member states –like Germany or Sweden- would at that time express their reservations. The historic decision was made in the EU Helsinki Summit of December 1999: Turkey was officially recognised as candidate state for accession to the European Union.⁹ On the other hand, important conditions were set as regards Turkish-Greek relations and the Cyprus problem. Before the start of EU accession negotiations Turkey should settle its disputes with Greece –or alternatively, agree to bring the cases in front of the International Court of Justice, while substantial progress was the least to be expected for the Cyprus problem. The EU Accession Partnership Document for Turkey was publicised by the European Commission on 8 November 2000. A decision on the start of Turkey's EU accession negotiations would be made during the EU Copenhagen Summit of December 2002.

Greece's stance toward the prospective accession of Turkey to the European Union marked a second milestone in the history of Greek policies on Turkey-EU relations. In 1995 Greece had abandoned its veto policy against any improvement of Turkey-EU relations and conceded to the customs union between Turkey and the European Union. This did not mean, however, that Greece would take any concrete measures or implement policies, which would favour the prospect of Turkey's membership to the European Union. The latter was to happen only after the EU Helsinki Summit of December 1999, when support of Turkey's orientation toward the European Union was added to the agenda of Greek diplomacy. According to the new policy, which had the personal touch of the new Foreign Minister George Papandreou, Greece should actively support all efforts made to improve Turkey-EU relations. This policy came to its culmination during the EU Copenhagen Summit of December 2002, when Turkey's compliance with the Copenhagen criteria was scrutinised. Although Turkey's failure to fully comply with the Copenhagen criteria was not doubted, Greece -alongside with Italy and Spain- argued that the European Union should reconsider Turkey's progress in the implementation of the Copenhagen criteria within 2003, so that Turkey's EU accession negotiations could start in 2004, provided that compliance with the Copenhagen criteria was achieved. The European Council decided to reconsider Turkey's progress in December 2004. Greece's proposal was not approved by the Council, but the fact that the state that had kept Turkey-EU relations frozen for more than a decade now belonged to the minority of EU member states that opted for higher speed in the progress of Turkey's EU accession process was characteristic of the change in the Greek view of EU-Turkish relations and the role of the European Union in Greek-Turkish relations.

NEO-REALISM AND GREECE'S POSITION IN TURKEY-EU RELATIONS

The switch of Greece's policies as far as Turkey-EU relations are concerned can be explained as an introduction of new theoretical models applied by Greek diplomacy for the better

⁹ Kalypso Nicolaidis, "Europe's Tainted Mirror: Reflections on Turkey's Candidacy Status After Helsinki" in Dimitris Keridis and Dimitrios Triantafyllou (eds.), *ibid.*, pp.247-248

understanding of Greek-Turkish relations and the role of the European Union factor in them. The theory of structural realism (or neorealism) was the analytical tool in the field of international relations that was most often applied to explain the course of Greek-Turkish relations in the 20th century. The three core assumptions of neo-realism, on the nature of actors, state preferences and international structure could be testified in the field of Greek-Turkish relations.¹⁰

According to the first assumption, the existence of “conflict groups”¹¹ is assumed, each organised as a unitary political actor that rationally pursues distinctive goals within an anarchic setting. While conflict groups are sovereign within their territory, at the international level they have to operate in anarchy, namely an environment where no sovereign power prevails. Conflict groups have to “help themselves” in the anarchic environment and, in order to do so, they are also assumed to act rationally¹². The most efficient available means to achieve their ends is chosen, subject to constraints imposed by environmental uncertainties and incomplete information. The second core assumption refers to the fixed and uniformly conflictual character of state preferences. Interstate politics is thus a perpetual interstate bargaining process over the distribution and redistribution of scarce resources.¹³ The assumption of the fixed character of state interests releases international relations thought from the “reductionist” temptation to seek the causes of state behaviour in the complex process of domestic preference formation, from the “moralist” temptation to expect that ideas influence the material structure of world politics, from the “utopian” temptation to believe that any given group of states have naturally harmonious interests and from the “legalist” temptation to believe that states can overcome power politics by submitting rules to common rules and institutions.¹⁴ The last assumption refers to the primacy of material capabilities. Interstate bargaining outcomes reflect the relative cost of threats and inducements, which is directly proportional to the distribution of material resources. Absent a common international sovereign, states are able to coerce or bribe their counterparts, and their ability is proportional to its underlying power, which is defined in terms of its access to exogenously varying material resources, military and other.¹⁵ Therefore, states seek power, namely both the ability to influence others and resources that can be used to exert influence, and also calculate their interests in terms of power, whether as end or as necessary means to a variety of other ends.¹⁶

Testing the relevance of the three core assumptions of neo-realism for Greek-Turkish relations could offer great help in understanding the rationale of Greece’s original position with respect to Turkey-EU relations. The international anarchic environment is easily testified in the field of Greek-Turkish relations. Turkey’s invasion and continued occupation of almost 40% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, despite international condemnation (including numerous UN Security Council decisions and General Assembly resolutions), the systematic violation of the Greek FIR and airspace borders by Turkish military aircraft, the statement of the Turkish parliament that the exercise of Greece’s sovereign right to extend its territorial waters in the Aegean to 12 miles would be a *casus belli* for Turkey and its refusal to accept the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice on Greek-Turkish disputes

¹⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theories of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 94

¹¹ States are assumed to be the most important “conflict groups” in world politics. The term, however, could under different historical circumstances also refer to tribes, principalities, city-states, domains etc.

¹² Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 164-165

¹³ Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?”, *International Security*, Vol. 24 No. 2 (Fall 1999), p. 13

¹⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 2-12

¹⁵ Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, *ibid.*, p. 17

¹⁶ Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *ibid.*, p. 165

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are ample manifestations of international anarchy the neo-realist theory refers to.¹⁷ Turkey's persistent violation of Greek sovereign rights and disregard of international law norms has not attracted any significant international support for Greece's positions as other international actors define their positions on the basis of their own interests. In that environment Greece has to "help itself" against Turkey, and its membership to the European Union is one of its primary weapons in that effort. As Turkey's main strategic objective has been its integration into the European political, economic and cultural realm, its campaign to join the European Union becomes critically important, and this increases Greece's leverage in using its EU membership to exert pressure on Turkey¹⁸. As regards the assumption of fixed and uniformly conflictual character of state preferences, Turkey has, indeed, fixed interests in both the Aegean dispute and Cyprus. Effective Turkish control over an increased part of the Aegean disregarding Greek sovereign rights over the Eastern Aegean islands and the legalisation of the current *de facto* partition in Cyprus epitomise Turkish fixed interests in Greek-Turkish relations. These interests can only come into conflict with Greek interests on full exercise of Greek sovereign rights in the Aegean and reunification of Cyprus. Greek-Turkish disputes are thus defined with the rules of a zero-sum game. The fact that Greece's interests are protected under international law does not have any bearing on their realisation. However, the fact that Turkey perceives membership to the European Union as one more of its fixed interests improves Greece's negotiating position. Greece can now better pursue its own fixed interests by fixing its interest on Turkey's EU membership on the base of its stance on Greek-Turkish disputes. Regarding the assumption of the primacy of material capabilities, Turkey has supported the pursuance of its fixed interests through extensive armaments and the maintenance of daunting military force on Turkey's borderline with Greece. Among its other functions, the Turkish military has also served as coercive force against Greece and its interests in Greek-Turkish disputes. Greece's response to the increasing pressure of the Turkish military could only be its own military build-up. The upgraded Greek military forces should –if not threaten- at least deter Turkish expansionism and prevent Greece's coercion to Turkish political demands. Turkey's intention to join the European Union, however, added an unexpected material capability for Greece. Greece's membership to the European Union and the rule of unanimity in EU decision making meant that Greece could use its veto power in the European Union in order to coerce Turkey to adopt more moderate views on Greek-Turkish disputes. The fact that Greece's new material capability was not "hard" –as in the case of military- did not reduce its effectiveness and coercive power.

LIBERALISM AND GREECE'S POSITION IN TURKEY-EU RELATIONS

Novel Greek tactics and strategies as regards Turkey-EU relations were the result of introducing liberal analytical tools into the study of Greek-Turkish relations and the role of the European Union. The liberal theory of international relations challenged the dominant neorealist school of thought paving the way for reform. Listing the three core assumptions of the liberal theory of international relations could provide us with an analytical tool to understand change in Greece's position in Turkey-EU relations.

According to the first liberal international relations theory assumption, the fundamental actors in international politics are individuals and private groups, who are on the average rational and risk-averse and who organise change and collective action to promote differentiated interests under constraints imposed by material scarcity, conflicting values and

¹⁷ Phaedon John Kozyris, "The Legal Dimension of the Current Greek-Turkish Conflict: A Greek Viewpoint" in Dimitris Keridis and Dimitrios Triantafyllou (eds.), *ibid.*, pp. 105-109

¹⁸ William Hale, *ibid.*, pp. 335-336

variations in societal influence.¹⁹ Liberal theory rests on a “bottom-up” view of politics in which the demands of individuals and societal groups are treated as analytically prior to politics. Political action is embedded in domestic and transnational civil society, understood as an aggregation of boundedly different rational individuals with differentiated tastes, social commitments and resource endowment. Socially differentiated individuals define their material and ideational interests independently of politics and then advance those interests through political exchange and collective action. Individuals and groups are assumed to act rationally in pursuit of material and ideal welfare.²⁰ The second assumption refers to representation and state preferences: States or other political institutions represent some subset of domestic society, on the basis of whose interests state officials define state preferences and act purposively in world politics.²¹ In the liberal conception of domestic politics, the state is not an actor but a representative institution constantly subject to capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction by coalitions of social actors. Representative institutions and practices constitute the critical “transmission belt” by which the preferences and social power of individuals and groups are translated into state policy. Individuals turn to the state to achieve goals that private behaviour is unable to achieve efficiently. Government policy is therefore constrained by the underlying identities, interests and power of individuals groups (inside and outside the state apparatus), who constantly pressure the central decision makers to pursue policies consistent with their preferences. According to the third assumption, the configuration of interdependent state preferences determines state behaviour.²² For liberals, state behaviour reflects varying patterns of state preferences. Each state seeks to realise its own distinctive preferences under varying constraints imposed by the preferences of other states. Liberals causally privilege variation in the configuration of state preferences, while treating configurations of capabilities and information as if they were fixed constraints or endogenous to state preferences. The critical theoretical link between state preferences and the behaviour of one or more states is provided by the concept of policy interdependence. Policy interdependence is defined here as the set of costs and benefits created for foreign societies when dominant social groups in a society seek to realise their preferences, that is the pattern of transnational externalities resulting from attempts to pursue national distinctive purposes. Liberal theory assumes that the pattern of interdependent state preferences imposes a binding constraint on state behaviour.

Applying the assumptions of the liberal theory of international relations to Greek policies regarding Turkey-EU relations offers many interesting perspectives in understanding the roots of the recent change. Individuals and private groups have been very influential in improving Greek-Turkish relations. Business groups, non-governmental organisations, intellectuals, journalists and, last but not least, the personality of the Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou contributed to climate improvement in Greek-Turkish relations. Those activities counterbalanced traditional public opinion approaches, which deemed hostility in Greek-Turkish relations to be inevitable. The establishment of transnational bonds and networks at the academic, business and civil society levels also improved understanding on both sides, thus reducing the role of prejudice and misinformation. Activities of individuals and private groups were instrumental for the re-conceptualisation of Greek strategic interests in terms of Turkey-EU relations and Greece’s active support of Turkey’s accession process to the European Union. As far as representation and state preferences are concerned, the recent improvement of relations between Greek and Turkish business, academic and civil society

¹⁹ Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Relations”, *International Organisation*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Autumn 1997), p. 516-517

²⁰ Andrew Moravcsik, *ibid.*, 517

²¹ Andrew Moravcsik, *ibid.*, 518-519

²² Andrew Moravcsik, *ibid.*, 520-521

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organisations have overcome the traditionally hostile state-sponsored approach and have had a positive impact on state policies regarding Greek-Turkish relations. Although the nature of the Turkish state makes it less susceptible to civil society influence, it is nevertheless true that the policies of both Greece and Turkey were affected by their societies. Turkey's firm commitment to the European Union and ambivalence on basic tenets of its policy on Greek-Turkish relations as well as Greece's positive role on the issue of Turkey's accession to the European Union are manifestations of that change. As far as the determination of state behaviour through the configuration of interdependent state preferences is concerned, the lack of any significant trade and other economic transactions was cited one of the main reasons for recurring Greek-Turkish disputes. Strengthening interdependence bonds between Greece and Turkey at the economic level was one of the first steps made toward détente and prospective normalisation in Greek-Turkish relations. Increasing the interest of Greece and Turkey in the well-being of the other could have only positive influence on their relations. The recent boom in trade between the two countries fostered cooperation between Greek and Turkish business circles and showed how beneficial a prospective normalisation of Greek-Turkish relations would be for both sides. Increasing interdependence between the Greek and the Turkish economy significantly influenced Greece's decision to alter its policies on Turkey-EU relations.

A TACTICAL MOVE OR STRATEGIC CHOICE?

I would argue in that paper that the changing role of the EU factor in Greek-Turkish relations indicates a shift in Greece's strategic thought as regards Turkey's future position in the world political system. Greece's switch of policies and support for Turkey's EU integration process is not a merely tactical move aiming to accrue political gains for Greece; on the contrary, it should be considered as a strategic move based on a drastic reinterpretation of Greek national interests.

Through its consistent veto policy, Greece had undertaken for many years the political cost of stalling Turkey-EU relations. Greece was viewed both in the Turkish and European public opinion as insurmountable obstacle for Turkey's EU integration. Some analysts argued that the end of Greek veto policy against the improvement of Turkey-EU relations and the subsequent active support of Turkey's EU membership did not necessarily signal a modification of Greek strategic views on Turkey's European future. Greece still held the opinion that Turkey's permanent exclusion from the European Union was beneficial for Greek interests; it understood, however, that it was not wise to undertake the whole cost of blocking Turkey-EU relations by itself. There were quite a few other EU member states, which were actually opposing Turkey's membership to the European Union, but found no reason to publicly declare their position and thus damage their relations with Turkey, because Greece's solid veto policy was guaranteeing a stalemate in Turkey-EU relations. Greece then understood that the prospects of Turkey's accession to the European Union would not be bright even if Greece's veto were lifted. Turkey was still far from complying with the Copenhagen criteria, while there were certain EU member states that would take an active role in obstructing Turkey's EU membership if the latter ever became a realistic task. Greece's veto policy was, therefore, harmful for Greek interests, as it was aiming to achieve something that would in any case happen, i.e. Turkey would remain outside the European Union regardless of Greek policies, while it accumulated discontent against Greece both on the Turkish and European side. Turkey would reasonably consider Greece to be the most determined opponent of its EU membership, while the EU member states and officials would react against the fact that a member state blocked major EU policies and harmed EU interests with respect to Turkey to further its narrowly defined national interests. In view of that situation Greece decided to change its tactics on the issue of Turkey-EU relations by lifting

its veto; its strategy, nonetheless, which opposed Turkey's accession to the European Union, remained identical. While lip service would be paid to Turkey's prospective integration into the European Union, the objectives of Greek foreign policy would now be served by Turkey's inability or unwillingness to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and the firm opposition of other EU member states to Turkey's accession.

The new position of Greece as regards the future of Turkey-EU relations is a product of a strategic reinterpretation of Greek-Turkish relations. Greece's membership to the European Union is no more viewed as a comparative advantage that could deprive Turkey of any close EU relations before the resolution of the Greek-Turkish disputes. On the contrary, Turkey's approach to the European Union is considered to be vital for the improvement of Greek-Turkish relations. Turkey's obligation to comply with the Copenhagen criteria would lead to a programme of political reform, which would in turn lead to a reconsideration of Turkish diplomatic policies towards Greece. The process of Turkey's political liberalisation and democratisation that Turkey should undergo in order to become eligible for EU membership would mean that the way Turkey defined and pursued its national interests would also have to be reformed. The role of unelected established groups like the military and the state bureaucracy, which have a heavy bearing on the formation of a hawkish Turkish foreign policy, would be decreased. Turkey's orientation toward the European Union would increase its need for good relations with Greece, as the latter would facilitate its efforts to join the European Union. It is to Greece's interest to foster the improvement of Turkey-EU relations: The alternative of an Europeanising and eventually European Turkey for Greece would be either a dictatorial military or a reactionary Islamist Turkey. In the first case, Greece would have to face an increasing military threat and implementation of the most intransigent policies as far as Greek-Turkish disputes are concerned. It would necessarily have to engage in an arms race with an even more militarised Turkey, whilst bilateral relations would sharply deteriorate. Regional instability would then affect Greece's economy, while the image of Greece as a state, which is not involved in international disputes but aspires to attain an even greater role in international conflict resolution, would suffer great damages. If the model of reactionary, anti-European Islamist Turkey prevailed, Greece would again have to confront an unstable, undemocratic and politically unpredictable Turkey whose isolation from the West would allow for more uncompromising policies. Greece would clearly become a "frontier land" –in Samuel Huntington's sense²³- against resurgent radical Islam, which would cause permanent instability at a regional level. In view of all those case scenarios it is argued that Greece is much better off if Turkey's strategic orientation remains fixed towards integration in the European Union. The prospect of closer relations between Turkey and the European Union has already facilitated political reform, liberalisation and improvements in human rights protection in the 1990s. This process could only be completed under the condition of ever-closer relations between Turkey and the European Union, which could eventually lead to Turkey's full EU membership. Turkey's full and complete democratisation, which would be achieved through Turkey's integration into the European political system, would guarantee normalisation in Greek-Turkish relations and set the foundations of Greek-Turkish cooperation. It is, therefore, to the strategic interest of Greece to champion Turkey's full membership in the European Union.

The redefinition of Greek strategic interests as regards Turkey's EU accession could happen neither immediately nor automatically. The switch from firm rejection to active advocacy of Turkey's accession to the European Union was in fact facilitated by a temporary divergence in Greek strategies and tactics with respect to Turkey-EU relations. When it became clear that it was politically too costly for Greece to block alone any improvement of

²³ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, 3, p.22 ff.

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EU-Turkey relations, the Greek veto was lifted. Most of the Greek diplomats and opinion makers supported, though, that decision, because they believed that other EU member states would effectively block Turkey's integration in the European Union. Greece would be relieved from an unnecessary burden in its foreign policy, while Turkey's accession to the European Union would not in practice become more probable. Greece thus adopted a new tactical but not strategic policy as regards Turkey-EU relations. While Turkey's prospective EU membership would be verbally supported, Greece's strategic planning still aimed at keeping Turkey outside the European Union. This divergence in Greek tactics and strategies turned out to be only temporary, a transitory stage between two convergent, but antithetical strategies on Turkey-EU relations. The active advocacy of Turkey's EU membership as initiated by George Papandreou signalled the change of Greek strategic considerations. Greece now perceived Turkey's integration into the European Union to be of vital importance for its strategic interests. Turkey's accession to the European Union would mean democratisation, liberalisation and abolition of military and bureaucratic establishments. A fully democratised and liberalised Turkey would be a better neighbour for Greece, and the resolution of pending Greek-Turkish disputes and the Cyprus issue would be facilitated. Greek strategies and tactics converged again, but this time on the view that Turkey's EU membership was beneficial and pursuable for Greece.

THE EUROPEAN UNION: A CATALYST FOR A GREEK-TURKISH RAPPROCHEMENT?

The switch in the theoretical models applied by Greece to conceptualise its interests with respect to Turkey-EU relations and its impact on relevant Greek policies does not answer the question of what role the European Union can play in bilateral Greek-Turkish relations. I would argue –in conclusion of my paper– that the European Union now offers the most concrete perspective for the normalisation of Greek-Turkish relations. Turkey's effort to achieve membership to the European Union by fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria is at the same time Turkey's democratisation effort. The success of Turkey's democratisation process will have beneficial influence on Greek-Turkish relations. The democratic peace thesis epitomises the reasons why Turkey's democratisation could lead to a complete Greek-Turkish rapprochement.

The democratic peace proposition is perhaps the most widely accepted thesis in the field of international relations.²⁴ Its primary claim is that democratic states do not wage war against each other. One of the secondary claims is that democratic states locked in disputes with each other choose more peaceful means of resolution than other pairings of states. Explanations of the democratic peace thesis usually fall into three main categories. According to the first, *democratic institutions place constraints on the ability of leaders to fight other democracies, or simply make them reluctant to choose war.* Besides, *norms shared by democratic states cause them to view each other as pacific and unthreatening.* According to the third explanation, *group democracy tends to foster economic interdependence, which reduces the likelihood of war.*

The applicability of the democratic peace thesis in Greek-Turkish relations is highly indicative of the positive influence that the European Union could have on improving Greek-Turkish relations. In a democratic Turkey the overwhelmingly influential role of the military and bureaucracy in Greek-Turkish relations would contract to the benefit of elected government. Political leaders would then be more reluctant to wage a belligerent policy whose main victims would be their voters. The existence of two democratic political systems in Greece and Turkey would also mean that mutual trust and understanding would be easier

²⁴ RAND Publications, *The Democratic Peace Idea*, <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1346/MR1346.appc.pdf>, pp.147-160

to achieve. Turkey's full democratisation would even further increase economic relations between Greece and Turkey. By supporting Turkey's democratisation process, the European Union can thus become a catalyst for the full normalisation of Greek-Turkish relations. Zero-sum game mentality would no more be considered to be applicable on the full range of Greek-Turkish relations. There might still be issues where Greek and Turkish interests may not coincide; on the other hand, there would be many other issues where Greece and Turkey could join forces and pursue common interests, while the stakes of cooperation would always be higher than those of conflict. The European Union project has already helped overcome nationalist conflict and historic rivalries in Western Europe –the primary example being Germany and France. It could help once more by providing an environment where perennial Greek-Turkish disputes could be mitigated and eventually resolved, and an era of Greek-Turkish cooperation would emerge.